

Sound System Disorder Eligibility Criteria -- Q&A

(Please refer to State Regulations implementing Part B of The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section III, Identification and Evaluation, Eligibility criteria for Sound System Disorder, http://dese.mo.gov/schoollaw/rulesregs/Inc_By_Ref_Mat/Special%20Education/IDEA%20Part%20B.html and the Compliance Program Reviews Standards & Indicators Manual, Document 1600, Sound System Disorder). <http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/Compliance/StandardsManual/index.html>

How should the sound system disorder criteria be implemented at a district level?

The State Plan sound system disorder eligibility criteria can be conceptualized in two parts:

1) *The student exhibits a delay of correct sound production based on state designated normative data.*

The state designated norms address the age at which students acquire correct sound production (individual phonemes). Students meet this part of the criteria when they are beyond those norms. The normative data does not apply to phonological patterns or overall intelligibility as that is addressed in 2 and 3 below.

2) *The child's sound system is significantly delayed based on a single word test and/or sentence/phrase repetition task and a connected speech sample with consideration given to the type of error recorded (substitutions, omissions, distortions, and/or additions). These errors may be described as single sound errors or errors in phonological patterns or multiple errors in the child's speech that compromise intelligibility and/or listener perception even though the recorded errors are considered within normal developmental guidelines.*

This describes the methods required to evaluate and document a significant delay. It is important to note that there is no quantifier identified for significant delay as applicable to sound system factors other than single sound norms -- such as phonological processing, number of sound errors, overall intelligibility, etc. This allows for identification of phonological processing problems and compromised intelligibility as a basis for eligibility via professional judgment, even if the requirements of (1) are not met. If districts have been using some guidelines for phonological processing pattern errors and/or compromised intelligibility that document the child's sound system is significantly delayed, those can continue to be used to find children eligible using professional judgment.

Are there state designated norms for phonological processing?

No. DESE has not designated norms for phonological processing to use for IDEA eligibility purposes. Similarly no norms or quantitative criteria are established for intelligibility ratings or other factors. Instead these factors are left to professional judgment. External groups (MSHA) and some local school districts have identified guidelines for using phonological processing in eligibility determinations, but these have not been state designated norms in the past and are not currently state designated norms.

What is significantly different between the current and previous sound system criteria?

The major difference is that school districts again have consistent state designated norms for single sound production to use as part of the determination of eligibility. Districts had such norms in past State Plans. Other factors such as phonological processing problems, compromised intelligibility, percent of consonants correct, number of individual sound errors, severity ratings and other factors can be used to qualify students who do not meet the state designated norms for single sound production based on professional judgment. This has not changed from the previous State Plan. In addition, it is critical to remember that the sound system disorder must adversely affect the child's educational performance, cannot be the result of dialectal differences or second language influence and the child must need special education services to be IDEA eligible.

Can a district serve children with speech production problems outside of special education?

Yes. Children with speech production problems can receive non-special education intervention designed to address those problems. Some Missouri schools are successfully utilizing alternative service delivery models with speech-language pathologists delivering sound system intervention outside of special education. Districts may develop guidelines regarding students for whom such interventions are appropriate using procedures aligned with a response to intervention approach that continues to ensure access to special education when necessary.